



Design Philosophy

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Osmosis architecture – an aesthetic link between the past and the future

Abstract

Changing the appearance of the superficiality of a form means transformation, and the basis for transformation is synonymous with the Greek term metamorphosis.

Transformation describes a transitional state, the moments that accompany transformation, the fulfilment of an action, the playing out of a process, the accomplishment of the transformation of a subject or object.

Metamorphosis seems to be or is a reference to something, a memory, an allusion to a process that is autonomous or endogenous – coming from within, triggered by internal factors.

In this constant process of transformation, architecture can be likened to a living organism that is also subject to internal transformation, that is constantly undergoing a process of internal transformation.

In these considerations it is crucial to show that transformation and metamorphosis are two ways of exploring one of the most important creations of civilisation, which are our cities, that the results of the transformation of specific fragments of cities are the results of design processes based on the idea of the creation of form in the process of its release in the conditions of existing reality.

Key words: osmosis, idea, form, context, creation

Introduction

Experiences of the past inspire the architecture of tomorrow – this universal truth is borne out in the records of architectural history, experiences that are often hidden or underestimated.

In these considerations it is crucial to show that transformation and metamorphosis are two ways of exploring one of the most important creations of civilisation, which are our cities, that the results of the transformation of specific fragments of cities are the results of design processes based on the idea of the creation of form in the process of its release

in the conditions of existing reality – ideas that should grow out of Albert Einstein's beautiful sentence: *Enough for me the mystery of the eternity of life, and the inkling of the marvellous structure of reality, together with the single-hearted endeavour to comprehend a portion, be it never so tiny, of the reason that manifests itself in nature* (Einstein 1949, 5). In the context of this statement by Einstein, delighting in the beauty of the world, transformation and metamorphosis can also be understood as “the magnificence of building of reality” (Zamorska-Przyłuska 1997).

To be the architecture of tomorrow, the “other” – is not an architectural design philosophy. An architecture that is “different” means striving to consider the fundamental problems of knowing the essence of architecture, and through it to understand the overall universal urban image and to seek “certainty in its creation”.

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Architecture surpasses “ordinary” art, it stands in opposition to prevailing fashion.

It is not only about shapes and skin – the façade shell. Architecture embodies a culture derived from the past, but concerned with the present and future. It is to address contemporary, up-to-date attitudes to life, “improved” by the past in the use of space, materials and technology, and the perception of beauty and balance of values perpetuated in noniconic buildings – less exciting but cleverly made – friendly to people and the environment, realised not just for their original form or pioneering engineering, but creating a new generation of architecture emerging by osmosis. The interpenetration of experiences from the past with a vision of the architecture of the future, which is the setting for life events for generations to come. It does not matter how creative or experimental a single building is – it always changes the whole city! Paying attention to the fact that architecture is always created in a specific context is part of the essence of where it is built and the awareness that it assimilates elements from the wider world, entering into a relationship with what is local. If architecture draws exclusively on tradition, if it merely repeats it, it deprives the community in question of its reference to the world and its emanation of the contemporary. On the other hand, if the created architecture “duplicates” and quotes directly from the global visions, it does not allow the specific values and importance of what is local to resound in the specific place of its creation, thus depriving the local community of the sense of its rootedness in the built environment.

The conviction that, in the first instance, contemporary architecture is to be experienced as a physical and phenomenological encounter also has the potential to evoke transmitted meanings, interpretations and readings. Its aesthetic autonomy liberates architecture from its traditional meta-



Fig. 1. Jewish Museum Berlin (designed by Studio Libeskind). A symbol of the integration of citizens of Jewish ancestry expressed by the contradictory autonomy of architectural forms – “the old and the new” (photo by Guenter Schneider, source: <https://www.german-architects.com/en/projects/view/jewish-museum-berlin>)

Il. 1. Muzeum Żydowskie w Berlinie (proj. Studio Libeskind). Symbol integracji obywateli żydowskiego pochodzenia wyrażony sprzeczną autonomią architektonicznych form – „starego i nowego” (fot. Guenter Schneider, źródło: <https://www.german-architects.com/en/projects/view/jewish-museum-berlin>)

physics and symbolic content, often geared towards producing striking and memorable images. *Instead of an existentially grounded plastic and spatial experience, architecture has adopted the psychological strategy of advertising and instant persuasion; buildings have turned into image products detached from existential depth and sincerity* (Pallasmaa 2005, 30).

In this context, these reflections are another voice in the debate on architectural innovations for the improvement of living conditions conducive to the enjoyment of the beauty of the world and the affirmation of “cosmic religiosity” – the eternal law of order of the universe, by releasing the forms of what exists, forms trapped in the matter of the place of our future construction. Forms found, not invented, a priori imposed, giving an impression of completeness and peace, creating harmony of all manifestations of life!

Vitality of cities

Urban development, an ongoing process accompanying the vitality of cities, situates society as a great laboratory in which new solutions and meanings are created and experimented with, generating practices and relationships in constant transformation that shape its spaces. A key role in their creation is played by people in the various manifestations of their lives. Their influence as a community on future urban scenarios is done through initiatives and acting as mediators. The two decades of the 21st century have clearly revealed the disharmony of ambiguity, the collapse of all hierarchies ordering reality and the order of nature, and often the compromise of humanity. It seems that for the order and peaceful fullness of life – also in architecture – there have been years of social processes involving a decline in the living standards of individuals and collectives testifying to the need for an intensified dialogue of the new with the existing natural, material and historical environment.

The architecture of tomorrow should arise from the osmosis of the new through the filter of the experiences and values of what exists, of what is perpetuated by history, the myth of place, the experiences of people and tradition (Fig. 1). The architecture of tomorrow, in opposition to the theory of chaos, should believe in the harmony of the construction of the world, in nature, striving to realise what is mathematically the simplest – the beautiful and astonishing *harmonia mundi*. The beauty that remains in close connection with mathematics, the numerical laws of architecture and the subjective power of emotional impact.

Harmonia mundi: sounds vivid and present, enlivens the imagination, acts on the intellect, stimulates thought about architecture. It opens up broad perspectives for reflection on the meaning and essence of architecture itself. *Harmonia mundi* does not refer directly to a world that is becoming, disintegrating, only to be reborn again – it refers to the constant yardstick and pattern of all immediate, currently happening reality. The desire for *harmonia mundi* by projecting the horizon of our dreams for the creation of architecture and design of the future, responsible for maintaining the balance between the natural and the man-made environment – should underline the strong attachment to the vision of a harmoniously built world and become a message

for the creation of an aesthetic order of architecture in its image. This desire is not accidental, it lies deep within us, because harmony is synonymous with beauty! Beauty is not an abstract concept. It is commonly associated with the idea of goodness, with morality, identified with perfection – it is a set of qualities that make us like something, also that it has a positive aesthetic quality of being.

A view justified by the implication of social circles confirming that the well-being of cities depends on the quality and diversity of the systems of public spaces, the physical and social infrastructure animating urban space and urban life. Therefore, the vitality of the city, its attractiveness to changing generations of inhabitants, needs the identification of general criteria and universal design solutions, based on which the quality of existing public spaces can be shaped or redefined in terms of both its physical and social characteristics.

The threat to the preservation of order and harmony in urban space stems from the tendencies of modern civilisation, whose vision of chaos devoid of beauty prompts close observation of the landscape of modern cities, often filled with volumes of anonymous buildings devoid of individual expression and human scale.

Accompanying city centres is the growing disorder of the periphery – areas often turned into a dump of haphazard forms on a scale of ugliness that threatens the cultural landscape. This state of degradation stands in opposition to the role of architectural form, which Alvar Aalto¹ defined: *The form is a mystery that [...] gives people a feeling of pleasure [...]* (Aalto 1997, 179). In this vein, form was understood by other Finnish architects, recognising that the architectural landscape that surrounds humans should give them a sense of well-being offering people inspiring spatial experiences and experiences with architecture that is respectful of its surroundings, expressed in a contemporary language devoid of pride and lust for showiness.

The eminent architectural critic Alain de Botton, in his book *The Architecture of Happiness* (Botton 2008)², observes that order is fundamental to the objective beauty of geometry – a means of defending against the over-complication of the built environment, whose order of space should result from the effect of subordination of the parts of the whole. The validity of this view is justified by the timeless beauty of the architecture of ancient Greek civilisation (Figs. 2, 3).

Context

In his discussion of contextualism, Vittorio Gregotti refers to the “reconciliation” of values between completely contradictory ideas that the word “context” has taken on in its current pluralist understanding (Gregotti 1992, 111) (Fig. 4). Paolo Portoghesi notes, [...] *that the word “context” has little value if it is not considered in a broad sense. This means not limiting it to “the surroundings”, but extending it to include the whole continuum of values covered by the bound-*

aries of a neighbourhood, a city, a region [...]. Portoghesi notes the need to [...] *free the doctrine of contextuality from a limiting understanding of it, which is deeply relevant to the dreams and desires of our time ... and the resulting peaceful coexistence of tendencies that use entirely new languages – the scenery and spirit of our time* (Portoghesi 1992, 116).

In the ongoing game of the city, shaping our future, new ideas and trends should be a reflection of the position, action and individuality of the creative architect, who, in creating the new, [...] *performs an act of creation and reaction, thus*



Fig. 2. Dolne Młyny Kraków (designed by Romuald Loegler).

The search for aesthetic harmony through urban-architectural osmosis expressed in a dialogue with local conditions, a preservationist-protected industrial past with new, exclusive residential development (source: <http://loegler.pl/uzytecznosc-publiczna/>)

II. 2. Dolne Młyny Kraków (proj. Romuald Loegler). Poszukiwanie estetycznej harmonii w drodze urbanistyczno-architektonicznej osmozy wyrażającej się dialogiem z miejscowymi uwarunkowaniami, konserwatorsko chronionej przemysłowej przeszłości i nową, ekskluzywną zabudową mieszkaniową (źródło: <http://loegler.pl/uzytecznosc-publiczna/>)



Fig. 3. Metropol Parasol Sevilla (designed by Jürgen Meyer).

As a place of collective memory with an archaeological site, the new contemporary centre, a unique space of urban activity, demonstrates a new way of interpreting the urban landscape (photo by David Franck, source: <https://jmayerh.de/metropol-parasol/?n=2083>)

II. 3. Metropol Parasol Sevilla (proj. Jürgen Meyer).

Jako miejsce zbiorowej pamięci ze stanowiskiem archeologicznym, nowe współczesne centrum, wyjątkowa przestrzeń miejskiej aktywności, demonstruje nowy sposób interpretacji miejskiego krajobrazu (fot. David Franck, źródło: <https://jmayerh.de/metropol-parasol/?n=2083>)

¹ Alvar Aalto (1898–1976), Finnish modernist architect esteemed for his humanist approach to architecture.

² The bestselling author considers how private homes and public buildings affect how people feel and how housing can be built to promote a sense of happiness.



Fig. 4. Musical Theatre in Poznań (designed by Romuald Loegler). The distinctiveness of the contemporary, iconic architectural composition, whose originality and aptness in relating to the surrounding buildings results in a shape that fits in innovatively with the panorama of the downtown district (source: <http://loegler.pl/uzytecznosc-publiczna/>)

Il. 4. Teatr Muzyczny w Poznaniu (proj. Romuald Loegler). Wyrazistość współczesnej, ikonicznej architektonicznej kompozycji, której oryginalność i trafność odniesienia się do otaczającej zabudowy skutkuje kształtem bryły wpisującej się w nowatorski sposób w panoramę śródmiejskiej dzielnicy (źródło: <http://loegler.pl/uzytecznosc-publiczna/>)

crossing the boundaries of architecture as he discovers its new areas (Loegler 2019, 123). By creating new situations that respond to current needs, they induce changes in our behavioural patterns while giving meaning to future life

situations. Urban and architectural design as a function of the city – [...] *result-of-innovation-and-experience-of-tradition, the architect's innate ability to think at a human scale* (Loegler 2019, 123) – naturally locates the problem an-

chored in the idea of contextualised architecture. As in hermeneutic philosophy, a contextual attitude in architecture is meant to stimulate reflection on the time-bound existence of architecture and its rationality (Loegler 1992; 2011).

The contextual attitude has influenced and continues to influence much of contemporary architecture, whose creators refer to regionalisms or postmodern presence in the past. Contextualised architecture is identified by architects in the relationship between the “old” and the “new”, whereby the “new” is stimulated by technical and cultural advances, often to the exclusion of an in-depth analysis of the interaction of the “new” with its place of origin. The great diversity of the language of newly created architecture raises doubts as to whether the notion of contextual architecture is not, above all, a convention intended to ensure the coexistence of the various options of contemporary pluralism – a kind of rhetoric that ends up equating the discourse on contextualism with a critique of technological civilisation and a way of seeking to rediscover local colour and roots (Fig. 5). However, it is impossible to ignore the reflection on architecture and urbanism in the context of cultural and civilisational change. Today’s time locates contextualised architecture in an area of theoretical, geographical and regional particularisms arising from modes of construction, specificities of urban culture and traditional typologies. Today’s time adds new “tools” – contemporary means of construction and materials that provide a guarantee of authenticity, and it means creating a present that accepts the need for the “new”, both from the point of view of the requirements of contemporary urban planning and in response to current social needs for universality and comfort in urban life.

Defining the value of a place

In order to function in the “labyrinths” of our cities, it is necessary to control their forms, which, pushed beyond their existing boundaries, come into contact with the surrounding context. The architecture of contemporary buildings often makes no attempt to fit into the public space, failing to establish the desired relationship with the city. It confirms that the CITY is unaware of the importance and rank of architecture. This unawareness manifests itself through significant slip-ups, which are always committed as a result of erroneous spatial policy and planning errors stemming from the city’s lack of the need to achieve contextual coherence, including a moral context implying a specific treatment of the role of architecture in the development of modern (contemporary?) societies. Its development should be shaped by the conditions of human activity, not the other way around. As modern, architecture should be an environment for realising the aspirations of the individual and the community, an environment whose quality is created by a broadly conceived contextual attitude.

Understanding of context in urban and architectural creation is subject to the individual viewer. The generalisation of the understanding of context leads to multiple interpretations, despite the fact that it is obvious to almost everyone that any creation – a new architectural intervention – should be the result of structural regulations occurring in the place designated for it.



Fig. 5. Jams Simon Galerie Berlin (designed by David Chipperfield). Combining the old and the new created on the basis of classical principles and rules of beauty (photo by Simon Menges, source: <https://davidchipperfield.com/projects/james-simon-galerie>)

Il. 5. Jams Simon Galerie Berlin (proj. David Chipperfield). Łączenie starego z nowym kreowane w oparciu o klasyczne zasady i reguły piękna (fot. Simon Menges, źródło: <https://davidchipperfield.com/projects/james-simon-galerie>)

The contextual existence of the “new” is complicated by the fact that architects have little say in choosing a location to determine whether it is suitable so that the programmed “intervention” can be adapted to its surroundings and thus given the right emotional content.

Understanding of context is most often made through direct spatial experiences found in the existing, historically shaped architectural setting. Fewer experiences are provided by a processed environment that adequately meets the needs of the present day, using the imagery and architectural language of the present day, not least because contextualism has for many years been, or perhaps still is, dismissed as a criticism of technology and civilisation. In the belief of many, contextualism could only be realised through a nostalgic return to an existence before the technical revolution.

Summary

The postmodern period has developed almost a stereotype of thinking about context, based on the conviction that the historical fabric of streets and squares defines the basis for new interventions, and not only with regard to reconstruction or the reproduction of urban form, not infrequently with the recommendation to “copy” the historically stylistic architectural application of buildings found in the vicinity of the site of the new intervention. The past in terms of the geometry of space and often also function is also referred to in completely new urban creations. The question arises, however, whether the mere fact of subordinating oneself to the regulations found at the site makes the individual objects or complexes a fully-fledged creation? Is not it more important how they – the new creations – use the context to find their individual expression?

There is certainly no need for the “new” to lead to the devastation of the old. This does not mean that the place of



Fig. 6. Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology in Kraków (designed by Arata Izosaki). Visible from the terrace of Wawel Hill, integrated into the meanders of the flowing Vistula River, its undulating lines create the geometry of the building's roof structure, which does not disturb the long-lasting genius loci of its location (photo by J. Ochoński, source: <https://dzieje.pl/wystawy/manggha-przygotowuje-szesc-wystaw-na-temat-buddyzmu>)

Il. 6. Centrum Sztuki Japońskiej w Krakowie (proj. Arata Izosaki). Widoczne z tarasu Wzgórza Wawelskiego, wkomponowane w meandry płynącej rzeki Wisły, jej sfalowanymi liniami tworzy geometrię konstrukcji dachu budynku, niezakłócającej trwającego od dawna genius loci miejsca jego lokalizacji (fot. J. Ochoński, źródło: <https://dzieje.pl/wystawy/manggha-przygotowuje-szesc-wystaw-na-temat-buddyzmu>)

contemporary intervention cannot remain what it was before the intervention, before the appearance of the “new”, retaining its character but enriched with a new quality that builds the geological value of the living place and its com-

munity. When analysing the phenomena of architectural or urban creations, it must be objectively stated that they are created on the foundations of the past. For each place of “new construction” is not an abstraction, a utopia, but a real complex whose recognition and appreciation of its value allows for its development and modification.

Can architectural ideas, then, as a collective legacy, be separated from the culture of a particular time? Does such an intellectual stance, which allows architecture to be designed rooted in its location, mean that it has to give up its own contemporary face?

Answering these questions is not easy. The definition of place-related values and the pursuit of the “appropriate form” should not be the result of the individuality or originality of the expression of the architecture created, nor should it be limited by the obligation to speak only with quotations from the past!

Context – an important aspect of architecture – in the absence of any binding style rules, should be understood ideologically, politically, historically and culturally – in a word, broadly! The criterion of harmony of the world – beauty, is to define the value of a place as the contextual conditions for a new architectural or urban creation based on the relationship between the “old” and the “new” and on reflection on the periodic nature of architecture, which a priori denies a nostalgic return to the past, sanctioning the existence of the “new”: a formally differentiated architectural substance while maintaining a uniform, equalised degree of aesthetic quality (Fig. 6).

This understanding of the contextual creation of architecture, of its contextual being realised by the unity of the aesthetic level: the found and the new, which is, above all, the



Fig. 7. Łódź Philharmonic (designed by Romuald Loegler). The architectural composition emphasises the context of the venue with a neutral, contemporary form expressed in a subtle, tactful and elegant architectural language (photo by Wojciech Chryński, source: <http://loegler.pl/uzytecznosc-publiczna/>)

Il. 7. Filharmonia w Łodzi (proj. Romuald Loegler). Architektoniczna kompozycja podkreśla kontekst miejsca neutralną, współczesną formą, wyrażoną subtelnym, taktownym i eleganckim językiem architektonicznym (fot. Wojciech Chryński, źródło: <http://loegler.pl/uzytecznosc-publiczna/>)

result of the ability in the creative process to define values in relation to place, to fully experience, understand and accept it. Neither the so-called “accidents” nor regionalism or other possible attitudes offer the possibility of objectifying the contextual being of architecture. Neither does tradition understood as a value that is not subject to evolution, nor does the postmodern presence in the past certainly do so. Architecture, after all, also has its reality in aesthetic terms, in beauty, which is not a “quality of things” but a human reaction to them, to the architectural character, to the good or bad measure of it in relation also to the urban or natural environment (Figs. 7, 8).

There are many places that confirm the thesis that the coherence of the architectural quality of the “new” creates a new value of the contextual setting – an image of the past. There are many places that prove that the contextual existence of architecture is confirmed not by stylistic homogeneity, tradition or regionalism, but is expressed by the appropriateness of the aesthetic quality of architecture existing side by side. It is architecture, [...] *unusual, original urban composition – immanent, [...] but artistic, constituting its own aesthetic entity different from others [...]*, according to professor Wojciech Kosiński, that is the fourth factor of the city’s originality (Kosiński 2016, 19).

There are many places demonstrating that relating and subordinating architecture to the local landscape only through structural mechanisms does not automatically solve the problem of the quality of its contextual occurrence. Contemporary architecture is not meant to deny the roots and traditions of its place of origin. It has the right to consciously distance itself from the classical tradition... When creating an aisle of tradition, it is essential to be aware of the need to accept the valuable things that belong to the past. Awareness of this fact also means that contemporary architecture cannot be built according to “yesterday’s” standards. Its very existence as a genuinely contemporary architecture must be sanctioned by the right of the “new” to constitute the present while respecting the authentic values of the past.

Translated by
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Fig. 8. Scientific Information Center and Academic Library (CINiBA) Katowice (designed by Dariusz Herman, Piotr Śmierzewski). With its architecture, its individual language of architectural form, the library has become the catalyst for a new redevelopment plan for the university campus – a new time of university expansion into the life of the city and the region (photo by Jakub Certowicz, source: <https://analog-architecture.com/2002-ciniba/>)

Il. 8. Biblioteka Akademicka Katowice (proj. Dariusz Herman, Piotr Śmierzewski). Biblioteka, swoją architekturą, jej indywidualnym językiem architektonicznej formy, stała się katalizatorem dla planu przebudowy kampusu uniwersyteckiego – nowego czasu uniwersyteckiej ekspansji w życie miasta i regionu (fot. Jakub Certowicz, źródło: <https://analog-architecture.com/2002-ciniba/>)

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Streszczenie

Architektura osmozy – estetyczny łącznik między przeszłością a przyszłością

Zmiana wyglądu powierzchni formy oznacza transformację, a bazą dla transformacji jest synonim greckiego pojęcia metamorfoza.

Transformacja opisuje stan przejściowy, momenty towarzyszące przemianie, spełnianie się akcji, rozgrywania się procesu, dokonywania się przemiany danego przedmiotu lub podmiotu.

Metamorfoza zdaje się być lub jest nawiązaniem do czegoś, wspomnieniem, aluzją do procesu, który jest autonomiczny lub endogeny – pochodzący z wnętrza, wywołany przez wewnętrzne czynniki.

W tym stałym procesie przemian architektura może być porównana do żywego organizmu, który także podlega wewnętrznej przemianie, który stale podlega procesowi wewnętrznych przeobrażeń.

W niniejszych rozważaniach kluczowe jest wykazanie, że transformacja i metamorfoza to dwie drogi do eksplorowania jednego z najważniejszych wytworów cywilizacji, jakim są nasze miasta, że rezultaty transformacji konkretnych fragmentów miast to wyniki projektowych procesów opartych na idei kreacji formy w procesie jej uwalniania w uwarunkowaniach istniejącej rzeczywistości.

Słowa kluczowe: osmoza, idea, forma, kontekst, kreacja